

---

# HUNGARY

---

## Republic of Hungary

**Population:** 9.9 million (2.0 million under 18)

**Government armed forces:** 33,400

**Compulsory recruitment age:** 18

**Voluntary recruitment age:** 17

**Voting age:** 18

**Optional Protocol:** signed 11 March 2002

**Other treaties ratified** (see glossary):

CRC, GC AP I and II, ICC, ILO 138, ILO 182

***The minimum voluntary recruitment age was 17 with parental consent but it was not known whether under-18s were serving in the armed forces.***

---

## Context

There was continued concern about ill-treatment of detainees, particularly members of the Roma community, by police. Roma continued to be subjected to widespread discrimination, and the police reportedly failed to protect them from racist violence. Large numbers of asylum seekers were held in detention, leading to concerns that their need for protection would not be recognized.<sup>1</sup>

---

## Government

### National recruitment legislation and practice

The constitution states that “Subject to their general defence obligations, citizens are expected to undergo military service, armed or unarmed, or civil service in terms specified by law” (Article 70).<sup>2</sup>

The legal basis for conscription is the 1993 Statute on Home Defence, as amended: “Conscription obligation starts at the completion of age 17 and ends on December 31 of the year the conscript turns 50” (Article 69). A conscript must register by 1 January of the year he is 18. Regular military service, armed or unarmed, is for six months, with obligations for reserve service of up to five months. Alternative civilian service is for 11 months, and may be carried out in hospitals, schools or other public services. Volunteers for military service may be enlisted between the ages of 18 and 25, or from 17 with parental consent. A conscript may commit a criminal offence if he fails to appear in person before the recruiting authorities, to notify them of his circumstances, or to enlist.<sup>3</sup>

The rights and obligations of contracted soldiers are defined by the Statute No. XCV on the Legal Status of Professional and Contracted

Soldiers of the Hungarian Armed Forces (Article V).<sup>4</sup> The Ministry of Defence stated that the minimum age for voluntary recruitment was 18.<sup>5</sup>

The armed forces have been reformed and gradually professionalized in recent years, the number of enlisted soldiers growing as the number of conscripts fell. Between six and seven thousand soldiers are enrolled four times a year for military service. Since 1996 the armed forces have taken part in NATO-led peacekeeping operations.<sup>6</sup>

### Military training and military schools

Hungary has several military educational institutions, including the Beri Balogh Adam Secondary School and Dormitory for Home Defence for students below the age of 17. Students aged between 18 and 23 may attend the Kinizsi Pál Professional Non-Commissioned Officers Training School (KTSZ) or the Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University for officers.<sup>7</sup>

---

## Developments

### International standards

In May 2002 Hungary’s representative told the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children that the constitutional process for ratifying the Optional Protocol was under way.<sup>8</sup> No date had been set for ratification by early 2004.<sup>9</sup>

- 1 *Amnesty International Reports 2002, 2003 and 2004*, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/engindex>.
- 2 Constitution, at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.kum.hu/Archivum/Torvenytar/law/const.htm>.
- 3 Ministry of Defence, <http://www.honvedelem.hu> (Recruitment, General conscription).
- 4 Ministry of Defence, op. cit. (Recruitment, Contracted military service).
- 5 Communication from the Ministry of Defence to Child Soldiers Coalition, 3 May 2004.
- 6 Permanent Mission of Hungary to the UN, <http://www.un.int/hungary> (Hungarian defence forces).
- 7 Communication from Ministry of Defence to Child Soldiers Coalition, op. cit.
- 8 Statement by State Secretary Imre Szakacs, 8 May 2002, Permanent Mission of Hungary to the UN, op. cit. (Selected statements in the UN).
- 9 Communication from Ministry of Defence to Child Soldiers Coalition, op. cit.